

EXAMINER'S AMENDMENT

An examiner's amendment to the record appears below. Should the changes and/or additions be unacceptable to applicant, an amendment may be filed as provided by 37 CFR 1.312. To ensure consideration of such an amendment, it MUST be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee.

Authorization for this examiner's amendment was given in a telephone interview with Atty. Lois K. Ruszala, representative to applicants, on June 19, 2009.

IN THE CLAIMS:

Claim 13, line 1, “any one of Claims 1-12” has been changed to –Claim 10-.

Claim 17, line 8, “first” has been deleted.

Claim 18, line 1, after “oxide” –reaction product—has been added.

Claim 19, line 2, “epoxidation” has been changed to –reaction-

Claims 1-20 and 22-24 are allowed.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Virginia Manoharan whose telephone number is 571-272-1450.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Glenn Caldarola, can be reached on 571-272-1450.

The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for

Art Unit: 1797

published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR.

Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only.

For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

/Virginia Manoharan/
Primary Examiner, Art Unit 1797

REASONS FOR ALLOWANCE

The following is an examiner's statement of reasons for allowance:

The problem addressed by the instant method is to provide an improved method in the separation and purification of propylene oxide reaction products wherein propylene glycol is not required as an extraction solvent; and wherein the separation method did not produce unacceptable losses of propylene oxide due to by-product formation with methanol or extractive solvents in the crude product. [See page 3, lines 21-29].

This problem is solved according to the invention by providing a method/process comprising, interalia, of introducing a reaction product comprising propylene oxide, methanol, and water into a bottom section of an extractive distillation zone; introducing water into an upper-half section of said extractive distillation zone; removing from said extractive distillation zone under distillation conditions a bottoms stream comprising propylene oxide, water, and methanol; and removing from said extractive distillation zone under distillation conditions, an overhead or side-cut stream comprising a purified propylene oxide essentially devoid of methanol and water; the extractive distillation conditions being sufficient to maintain a yield loss of propylene oxide of less than about 0.3 mole percent. [See page 4, lines 3-15].

The above method/process of solving the problems is neither disclosed by the prior art nor is obvious.

Thus, claims 1-20 and 22-24 are deemed allowable over the prior art of record.

Any comments considered necessary by applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably accompany the issue fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled "Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance."

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Virginia Manoharan whose telephone number is 571-272-1450.

/Virginia Manoharan/

Primary Examiner, Art Unit 1797